



Water Supply and Use in the United States

Water covers approximately 70 percent of the Earth's surface, but less than 1 percent of that is available for human use. The world must share this small amount for agricultural, domestic, commercial, industrial, and environmental needs. Across the globe, water consumption has nearly doubled in the last 50 years. Managing the supply and availability of water is one of the most critical natural resource issues facing the United States and the world.

Homes use more than half of publicly supplied water in the United States, which is significantly more than is used by either business or industry. The average family of four uses approximately 400 gallons of water every day. Those amounts used can increase depending on location; for example, the arid West has some of the highest per capita residential water use because of landscape irrigation.

With water use in the United States increasing every year, many regions are starting to feel the pressure. In the last five years, nearly every region of the country has experienced water shortages. Thirty-six states are anticipating local, regional, or statewide water shortages by 2013, even under non-drought conditions.

To help American homes and business make more efficient use of their water, EPA has developed WaterSense, a public-private partnership program. By offering simple ways to reduce water use through water-efficient product choices—with no sacrifice to quality or product performance—WaterSense helps Americans save water and money.